

The School Board Corner

By Robert Hunt, Aquia District
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As we come to the close of another calendar year, I hope that all of our students, staff and families will enjoy the holidays and time spent with family and friends. This annual time of celebration and renewal is something to cherish and appreciate.

As you know, maintaining a quality school system and managing our growth are our main priorities. As we begin development of the budget, it is of vital importance for you to get involved. Do not assume we have all the information and understand all the issues. When compared to the surrounding school districts, Stafford is doing great. Our accreditation level is excellent with all our school receiving full accreditation. Even with our growth, Stafford is maintaining good pupil/teacher ratios and our successes are easily measured by the continuously improving SOL scores. I am very excited about the "Strong Schools Safe Students" (S4) initiative. Ensuring the emotional well-being, safety, and security of all the Stafford County Public Schools students and staff is critical. Research shows kids need to feel safe before they can learn, be successful, and flourish.

One of the criticisms of our *national* public school system is the learning gap (achievement as measured by standard tests between minority and non-minority students) is increasing. This does seem to be true in many large city schools. However, the results from three years of testing data in SCPS demonstrate that we are solving the problem. The rate of failure for minority students (minority students measured as black and Hispanic students) has decreased by 4 percent over the last three years. And, as logic would require the rate of pass and advanced pass has increased by 4 percent. This is news worthy of national status. We are doing things that other areas of the country cannot seem to do. Congratulations to Dr. Murray, the administrative staff, and our teachers. THIS REPRESENTS A JOB WELL DONE!

The minority failure rate in 2003-2004 was just over 20 percent. We all agree the failure rate is still too high. But SCPS are demonstrating the fact that they are fixing that problem. In 2003-2004 the average pass rate (pass plus advanced pass) for non-minority students was just over 90 percent. The pass rate for minority is just over 78 percent. This difference (12 percent) is down from 2002. But here again, there is the really good news. The pass rate for both minority and non-minority is increasing. And, the pass rate for minority students is growing faster than that for non-minority students. This is more really good news. The educational professionals in Stafford are using standard tests to demonstrate the great job they are doing.

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